Smoking in trains and at railway stations

1433. SHRI RAMA MUNI REDDY SIR1GIREDDY: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Railways have decided to ban smoking in trains, stations, railway offices, etc. in pursuance of the order of the Supreme Court; and

(b) if so, the details of such ban?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI O. RAJAGOPAL): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. In pursuance of the directives of the Supreme Court in India, smoking has been prohibited in headquarters of the Railways, all office buildings of the railways, railway stations, railway platforms and other premises where there are railway establishments and in the coaches of the trains.

Spot inspection of railway bookstalls

1434. SHRI GAYASINGH: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Ministry of Railways *vide* para No. 2 part (1) to part-2 (iii) of their letter No. 92/TG. III /46426/Pt dated 13th September 1994, had directed the Zonal Railways to conduct spot inspections of each bookstall, for assessing the actual sales; and

(b) if so, the date-wise datails of the inspections conducted for the purpose by each Zonal Ralway, Division-wise?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI O. RAJAGOPAL): (a) In terms of sub-paras 2(i) to 2(iii) of the Ministry of Railways' letter No.92/TG.III-464/26/Pt dated 13.09.1994 the Zonal Railways (except Southern Railway) were advised to conduct on-the-spot inspections of the bookstalls of M/s A. H. Wheeler & Co. with a view to ensure that the amount of royalty due from them is paid by them to the railways.

(b) Information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the Sabha.

Unbundling of railways

1435. SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that as per a recent report ASSOCHEM has recommended that there is a need for unbundling the Indian Railways by associating the private sector and retaining the railway transport system;

(b) whether the Railways need to shake off their traditional system of subsidies by tariff rationalisation and introduction of new equipment and technology; and

(c) if so, what are Governments views in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI O. RAJAGOPAL): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir.

(c) There is no plan to unbundle Indian Railways by privatisation. However, certain activities like catering & tourism and optical fibre based telecommunication network are being hived off as separate corporations. Certain uneconomic branch lines are also being considered for concessioning. In the recent railway budget proposals, a beginning has been made to rationalise the freight structure by removing certain anomalies that had crept up in the course of time. It has also been proposed to rationalise the passenger fares for proper tariff rebalancing by modifying the taper in the fare structure to remove the existing anomalies and making other marginal changes in respect of minimum fares and rationalising the relativity of fares of various classes.

New equipment and technology are being introduced in various sphere of activity on Indian Railways from year to year.

Purchase of loco simulators

1436. SHRI R. P. GOENKA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a proposal to purchase 13 loco simulators, at a cost of Rs. 100 crores, for providing state-of-the-art training at to the loco drivers has been held up in protracted negotiations for over four years, due to complicated procurement procedures, forcing the Railways to purchase obsolete technology and at a cost, much higher than the price prevailing today;

(b) if so, the details of the original proposal/deal cotracted,& its present status; and

(c) the steps taken to procure the latest technology at competitive rates & to simplify procurement procedure?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI O. RAJAGOPAL): (a) and (b) Purchase of simulator for augmenting the training of the train drivers has since been finalized and the counter offer to the lowest